

The following oral history memoir is the result of 1 videorecorded session of an interview with Chloe Bass by Cynthia Tobar on August 3, 2015 in New York City. This interview is part of "Cities for People, Not for Profit": Gentrification and Housing Activism in Bushwick. Chloe Bass has reviewed the transcript and has made minor corrections and emendations. The reader is asked to bear in mind that she or he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

**Chloe Bass**

[Start of recorded material at 00:00:00]

Cynthia: Today is Monday, August 3, and we are here for the Bushwick Fair Housing Collective or history project. Can you please introduce yourself?

Chloe: My name is Chloe Bass.

Cynthia: And your occupation?

Chloe: I'm an artist and I currently live in Bed-Sty.

Cynthia: Can you tell me a little bit about your background, your early childhood, growing up, anything that [unintelligible 00:00:31].

Chloe: Sure. I was born and raised in New York City. I actually grew up in Manhattan on the Upper West Side and I lived there until I left New York for undergrad. I started undergrad in 2002. When I came back to live in the city again I wasn't in a position where I could live with my parents for a variety of reasons and so I was looking for housing at that point. I spent a couple of months actually in the really fortuitous position of house sitting for someone else so it gave me like a little leeway period before I needed to find my own place and during that period of time I was making more theatrical work at that time and I was rehearsing with some people that I was working with in Bushwick. And they lived in Bushwick. And when I said that I was also looking for a place they actually suggested since their lease was up that we could all move in together and find a bigger place in Bushwick.

So as a kid growing up in New York in the '90s and early 2000s I actually didn't go to Bushwick or to Williamsburg hardly at all. Maybe I had been to Williamsburg twice. I had been to Bushwick never and riding the L train was considered like a pretty scary thing to do, not advisable, not a place my parents would have been happy to hear that I was going mostly because it had a pretty bad reputation at that time. And I found out a lot about that since then and sort of the parts were true and the parts that were also maybe urban legends. But when I found the opportunity to live in an affordable place for me as a soon to be 22-year-old with friends of mine in Bushwick it seemed pretty great.

Cynthia: What year was that?

Chloe: That was in late 2006, early 2007. We officially signed our lease in January of 2007. We found the place December 2006.

Cynthia: And do you remember where it was?

Chloe: Yes. It is at the corner of Jefferson Street, between Scott and Cyprus. It's the last building heading towards Queens on Jefferson Street.

Cynthia: Tell me about that time.

Chloe: I mean it was bizarre. When we moved into the building, it was a building with a furniture warehouse on the ground floor and then they had converted the second and third floors to apartments and the fourth floor was just empty. And ultimately over the course of the five years that I lived there they made the fourth floor into apartments as well and then actually like in the fourth out of five years they closed down the furniture warehouse and to my understanding after I moved out they've turned that into like photo studios or some kind of event based space. I don't really know. And it's been very difficult to find any information about that even though I'm still closely tied to the neighborhood. So I don't know how well it's going for them. In any case, the furniture warehouse is not there.

So I had moved into the apartment over the loading dock for the warehouse and that's why our apartment was extra cheap because they knew it was going to be noisy and we said we didn't mind. We were paying 1900 dollars a month including all of our utilities and internet for a three bedroom loft. The rooms were different sizes so one of us was paying 625, one 650, and one 675, very affordable. Certainly what I would consider very affordable. And what that offered me at the time was actually the ability to not have to scramble to find fulltime employment and to actually to be working as a SAT tutor at that time and I could work on a client basis and then also be working on my own creative practice which was perfect and actually was so much better than any life I had envisioned for myself at that point. It seemed sort of magical. That having been said, there were no streetlights on our block because it was perceived to be a completely industrial block where the industry had left and so a lot of things had broken but no one had ever called 311 because there were not a lot of people there at nighttime.

So it was dark. Walking from Jefferson Street station from the Jefferson end to our house, it was completely dark. There were stray dogs that lived on our block and they would circle our block at night. I wouldn't say they were like wild dogs but like they were dogs I did not know. Right? That didn't belong to anybody. And things were a little bit chaotic in that respect. It was not chaotic with respect to any kind of violence though. I never experienced anything like that. The worse thing that happened to me in five years in Bushwick is my

bike got stolen twice which is a bummer but honestly my bike has also gotten stolen in New Haven, Connecticut, the upper West Side, like Williamsburg, so I wouldn't hold that against Bushwick. And the people who were living in my building were largely people who were pretty young like us. I think we had a couple of neighbors who were maybe in their early 30s but it was a pretty young building. And there were a number of reasons for that. The loft conversion that had been done was illegal so our landlord totally knew that we were living there but we all had to sign commercial leases.

He had put in our bathroom and kitchen and like he did a good job but technically he didn't have any residential tenants. The other thing about the building is that the guy who owned it was pretty old. He was Jewish but not Hasidic, an orthodox Jew but like he could shake my hand and stuff, so he wasn't as religious as the Hasidic landlords who can't touch women. He was a really nice guy. When my bike got stolen from actually within our building and it was locked up to our stairwell inside the building he happened to be there as I was figuring this out. I ran into him and I guess I was like crying a little bit and he asked me what was wrong and I said the bike was stolen. He was sort of scolding me for not locking it. I said I did lock it. He said where was it stolen from? I pointed to where it was stolen from. He said are you going to get a new bike? And I said yes. He said you can take up to one hundred dollars of the bike off your rent because I feel bad that this happened in the building. And I did. And he was true to his word. You know, the building was not perfect but I would say it was a pretty good situation for us.

A couple of times we needed to pay rent late. We were able to talk to him about that. He was fine with it. Then his son took over the building and it was totally different.

Cynthia: When did that happen?

Chloe: I moved in 2011, so I want to say like late 2009 or early 2010, the son, David, took the building out of his father's hands. I mean his father was probably at that point like 75. He was keeping the rent ledger in pencil in like a big notebook. I can see maybe why it was not the best business proposition and it was also clear to me that although he was charging rent that was maybe higher than other places in the neighborhood it was significantly lower than every other loft building in the neighborhood because he didn't seem to have caught up with the idea that a lot of people were moving to Bushwick and that it was actually an attractive place to live for a certain set of people. He like wasn't really paying attention to that at all. So he never raised our rent once in five years. When I moved out in 2011 it was not because I was gentrified out of my particular building but because a number of things had become untenable for me and I think that was a combination of like where I was at with my own personal life but also his son taking over the building and wanting all those original tenants to leave because we were eligible for the loft law.

They had passed a loft law protection in 2008 or 2009, I don't remember. And because I had signed a lease in 2007 I fell within the protection window and I could have been in there forever at that rate basically or not being increased by much. And so when things started to go wrong with your apartment as they inevitably do after five years of just like living in it, the son would not fix them and eventually for me what really frustrated the hell out of me was we had a pipe break in our wall. I don't know why. Right? Like I'm not in the wall, but the pipe broke and the water started flooding in the bathroom and when we tried to turn it off at the source because the pipe was broken it kept flooding and eventually we had like three inches of water in almost our entire apartment. And it was the weekend. And they just didn't do anything. And that was the point where I really started to lose my mind. So I wasn't gentrified out by price. I don't know if the things that happened to me that caused me to leave that place were necessarily direct or as a potential indirect results of change and change like regime change in the building. That may have been the case or it may have been just really bad luck and bad tending. I don't know.

Cynthia: What happened as a result? Did your other roommates also leave?

Chloe: It was my lease. I did not intend to get them evicted and I tried to speak with the building about what would happen and nobody ever really got back to me on that. I was at a point where I had actually committed to moving in with a partner and I had been trying for six months to get this all squared away and it didn't work. I needed to move on with my life. So I ultimately took the choice that benefited me the most and not the protection of my roommates. So we didn't have to pay the whole 1900 dollar check as one check. We could pay individually and one of my roommates I found out later had not been paying his part for a while. And so I don't know how much of it had to do with that as well. But since no one in the building ever got in contact with me about it, it was very difficult to assess what was going on.

Cynthia: So what happened after you left that particular building? Can you tell me a little bit about that process. Were you able to resettle [unintelligible 00:10:36]?

Chloe: Sure. So I moved to this apartment that we're in right now and I was initially moving here with my former partner. This is a rent stabilized building. It's a seven unit rent stabilized building in central Bed-Sty. I know at least two people who are living in this building have Section 8 vouchers. This building is a little bit decrepit, like the stairwell is kind of like really steep and kind of leaning and the outside of the building looks like it's in prison because I think it was gated off for a while and no one was living here and they never really took down like the chain link fence in the front and my apartment, if you go out on the fire escape, like the moldings are falling off the building. It seems

more cosmetic than anything else but it doesn't also seem safe because they're made out of stone. And right below the roof we had a leak from the roof and there's actually mold in my bathroom. So this building is not ideal but having been said it's very affordable, especially because under de Blasio we're having protection of rent stabilization. My rent went up 1% on my last lease and the next lease will be going up zero percent.

So when I moved here initially I was living here with a partner and we were each paying five hundred dollars a month. I have never paid more than 650 a month until I started living in this apartment alone about a year and a half ago. I would say as a single person and as an artist paying now and paying pretty close to 1100 dollars a month is both deeply untenable for me but also when I compare it to the cost of moving out it looks I'd be paying 900 or 950 to be living with a roommate and the difference in those two amounts is not great enough for me to give up living alone. That's a choice that I had the privilege to make. Right? I can say because nobody's dependent on me besides a cat, like I can choose to be a little bit financially uncomfortable and live in this place that gives me a lot of peace and happiness as opposed to moving in with somebody who's a stranger who might stress me out in a variety of ways or I might stress them out in a variety of ways and it would cost almost the same amount of money. Not everybody can make that choice.

And I don't even know how or why anybody would pay 950 a month to live with a roommate. Like for me, paying 650 in Bushwick to live with roommates was great because of what it allowed for me in my life with respectability of employment. But to be paying that much to live with other people who you don't necessarily know, which to me doesn't feel entirely emotionally safe even though the person might be completely nice, it seems kind of hazardous in like insidious little ways. It might grow aggressions of hazardous living.

Cynthia: So what happened with the apartment building after you moved out?

Chloe: I heard from the people who moved into my apartment right after I moved out. We had put a sticker on our mailbox and I couldn't peel it off actually because it had been there for so long. It had just like fused to the mailbox so they saw our names on the mailbox and they put up their own sticker over it but I guess they Googled me or they knew about me because of arts in Bushwick. A lot of people in the neighborhood had heard my name before even if they didn't know me personally and they sent me an email, just being like we moved into your apartment. We have a couple of questions about the building, this, that, and the other. It became clear that they had moved into a situation where they were paying I think 700 dollars more a month than we had been paying. So it went up from 1900 to 2600 like overnight. And I'm sure that the apartment was not improved and since there had been that flood like a lot of it was sort of not awesome because of the flood. Like we had wet floors and the floors

got messed up because it flooded. And I'm pretty sure nothing was done to fix that but I can't say that for sure.

Those people wound up not staying for very long. Someone else moved in after them. I don't even want to know what they're being asked to pay. I still have a few friends from that time who are still living in the building. I don't know that their rent has stayed the same but I know that they're not in a position to be paying much more than they were paying so it can't have gone up that much but for every new tenant who moves in there's no loft law protection because you're not eligible. You didn't have a lease during the right window of time and I don't think actually that anybody was able to follow through with organizing the whole building in court, to represent the building and the loft as opposed to the individual units.

Cynthia: What has your experience been with organizing when you were in Bushwick, before you were in Bushwick, after Bushwick with regard to issues [such as needs] as a working artist?

Chloe: So I don't come from an organizing background but my dad actually grew up in Queens and he grew up in a union housing project in Electchester, Queens, that's run by the electricians' union. My grandparents are not people who made a lot of money. They didn't go to college. My grandmother didn't graduate from high school. For them to have that kind of stable housing, they could lead like a really middle class life, raising two sons, being very comfortable. They lived in that building for 40 years. They moved out because they didn't have anybody living with them anymore and they wanted to live somewhere different and it could be like a retirement adventure for them to move, not because they needed to live. They would have had total stability there still if they had chosen to stay but they did not want to live in Queens anymore.

They moved out to Arizona and then they hated Arizona because they're actually like real New Yorkers and they discovered that the type of people who are like New Yorkers who moved to Arizona were not the people they wanted to know. And then they moved back here and they briefly lived in New Jersey but then they got a place in a building that's just for elderly people that's also relatively affordable. It's subsidized through the Salvation Army. So they live there. They're moving to [unintelligible 00:17:00]. So all of the elderly people in the next three years are going to have to move.

Cynthia: Where is this building again?

Chloe: It is on West End Avenue and 95th Street. It's on like a super posh block and I understand why the building was sold. It's gotten to be a very fancy neighborhood but it's also kind of shocking to me that the developers who bought it would just like evict. Seriously, there's nobody in the building younger than 65 and my grandparents are over 90. Where are they going to

move to? They don't have a source of income, like their retirement covers the cost of the apartment that they have because it's subsidized. So that's a whole other issue. So I don't have a history of organizing but I come from like understanding kind of how New York works and how it has changed. My mother moved here as an immigrant in 1969. She got an apartment on 7th Street between Bowery and 2nd because she was attending Cooper Union. Cooper Union was free and her apartment was 79 dollars a month. And that, the combination of those two things, enabled her to move here not knowing anybody or much of anything about being here and be okay.

You know I think it was hard for her in a variety of ways but like financially it was not a main concern where anywhere else she would have been well below the poverty level. In this case she was actually able to be okay, getting by on work that she could find piecemeal and really like focusing on going to school and being a student.

Cynthia: What era was this?

Chloe: She moved here in 1969. I think she got that apartment in '70. I don't know where she lived from '69 to '70. I think it was somewhere in Soho but I'm not sure what the circumstance was. And then she graduated from Cooper in '74, married my father in 1980. My dad was living on the upper West Side in a rental apartment, also very affordable. So she moved there but she kept the East Village apartment because it was still like less than 100 dollars a month and she kept it as her studio. So they could as recently married people without fulltime jobs because my dad was finishing up his PhD and my mother was transitioning from being like a part time teaching artist to being fulltime employed in the schools have two apartments which is crazy to me. Two apartments sounds like the biggest luxury imaginable but she lost the downtown apartment because that was a rent controlled building and you couldn't have residence in another place if you had a rent controlled apartment so she got evicted.

She sort of knew it would happen but she held on to it actually until almost 1990 before they figured it out. So my parents were then living on the upper West Side. My dad saved money and he bought an apartment on the upper West Side in 1990 for I believe for 250 or 260 thousand dollars. He bought a two bedroom, two bathroom apartment and that's where I was mostly raised. Out of idle curiosity, last year I did some research on what I could buy in Brooklyn for 250 or 260 thousand dollars and it was like nothing. It was certain not a two bedroom, two bathroom apartment where you could raise a family. But that has happened between my childhood in the '90s. For my dad to buy that apartment was a really big deal for him but it was also possible. It was a possible big deal and it gave us total stability and gives my parents total stability still. He finished paying off his mortgage maybe ten years ago. So

like he's good. They're good. Now that I'm not living there anymore, like they have two bedrooms for two adult humans. It's a luxurious situation. Right?

For me to spend that amount, I don't have that kind of down payment in the first place but even for me to spend that amount of money and not even be able to buy like a studio apartment is ridiculous. And there's no way that I make stability for a potential future family that I would have. I don't see how that would ever be possible.

Cynthia: So tell me a bit about what your father did to get to that point. You said he was studying for his PhD?

Chloe: He got a PhD in Comparative Literature. He was working as a French-English translator but then he decided to become a psychoanalyst so he was in this transition period between being like a philosophy, French guy to becoming a psychoanalyst and it took him a number of years to develop a fulltime roster of patients which he now has. Oh, wait, so getting back to my own history of organizing, I went to Yale for undergrad and when I was there we had two labor strikes and both of them very strongly affected my undergraduate experience. One of them, because the union that was on strike which was either Local 34 or 35, they both went on strike while I was there. I don't remember which one was the dining hall workers but one of them is the dining hall workers. So we had no dining hall. So Yale actually had to refund us all of our money for the meal plan which to me was like amazing.

First of all, I didn't want to be on the meal plan anyway. It was required. Second of all, the fact that they actually had to own up to like how disastrous the labor situation was by refunding all of this money to all of these people was a really interesting turning point for me and it started to show me how strikes could be very effective. I was born in the middle of the sanitation strike in New York in August, my poor mother, and my understanding of how that strike was resolved was just like [attrition]. Right? And then I was here during the transit strike and my understanding of how that strike was resolved was just like inconvenience. I'd never seen it be resolved because a larger financial institution is mad that they have to give back all this money that they collected from other people because of the strike. So that was really interesting for me to see.

And it showed me in a lot of ways that like we do have some power to be just a block of people being deeply recalcitrant for reasons that are important to us and that can affect something. I don't know how happy they were with the settlement but they were happy enough to go back to work. I don't know if that benefited people long-term. Those are questions to ask somebody in New Haven doing labor organizing. But when I came back to New York I had known my parents' stories. Like my mother didn't have me until she was 40 and before that point she had had a lot of opportunity to do and try a lot of

different things because this was not a criminally expensive place to live. And I really wanted that for myself. I wanted that kind of window of possibility of like between being 22 and let's say even between 22 and 30, forget 22 and 40, to have this flexibility to be making work and to be really able to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes and to not constantly having to be producing and working fulltime and like being exhausted.

And I did not have that opportunity even at 650 dollars a month. I had more flexibility than a lot of people but it wasn't the level of flexibility that my parents described to me when they were just like trying to figure out what they were doing with their lives. They didn't have to rush. And it wasn't because of family privilege. It was because you could just live here. It was find. And there were, granted, lots of other problems especially in the lower East Side, East Village area, but I think that in their description was something that affected them more peripherally than directly. I guess that's a privilege. Right? And that's a particular story but it was just interesting for me to grow up with that narrative and then look for it for myself and be like oh, it's not here. And if it wasn't here then and I'm about to turn 31 at the end of the month, if it wasn't here when I was 22, it is for sure not here now. It's only getting worse and worse to my understanding.

So what I wanted to do, what I was interested in was like how many people does it take to make a critical mass and like what is a critical mass of artists and what would that look like? By total amazing happenstance I stumbled onto a group of people who were at that point founding Arts in Bushwick. It was around the time of the first Bushwick Open Studios produced by Arts in Bushwick. And I met these people by accident. And they were really nice and they were really positive and they had no idea what they were doing and I had no idea what I was doing and they were like join us and I was basically like okay in the way that you can do when you're really young. But it quickly, to me and to Laura Braslow became an exercise in like well, artists are perceived as being really flaky, really transient, and really damaging to areas.

What would it mean if we as a community based organization could represent X number of artists, 50, 200, 600, a thousand, and come to the table to talk with other community organizations saying we're the constituency of people that you perceive to be harmful. We don't want to be harmful. What do we do? What do we do as a voting bloc? What can we give to you sort of like as volunteers? In what ways are you able to hire and sustain us because I don't think that artists necessarily have the financial flexibility to always be working for free. I think that's a myth. Nor do I think artists always want to be working with kids. That's another myth. I happen to love working with kids but like a lot of artists have never worked with kids a day in their lives. Would you really want someone who's never worked with kids to be working with your kids just because they're creative? But that is a side story.

You know, to say like we are part of this community and we understand that there is hesitance or discomfort but we don't want to be the people who just touch down here for a year and then leave and leave it worse than we found it. We actually want to be the other kind of people. We came here looking for stability as well. What we're looking for is not materially so different from what you're looking for. I used to say to some of my neighbors, not necessarily in my building but like on the surrounding blocks, like I probably make way less money than you think and I have a lot of flexibility and privilege because of my education and because I don't have dependents and because I don't have debt. But like realistically most of the time I was living in Bushwick I making 17,000 or 18,000 dollars a year, not a lot of money. And so to say I also believe that I am worth a clean park, a supermarket that doesn't have moldy vegetables, and like access to a clinic in my neighborhood means that I believe that you're worth it too. We're all worth it. Like how do we get these things that we all need without being forced to leave the place where we are?

And so that was really where I was coming at it from, of like there are things in this neighborhood that are awesome for me and there are things in this neighborhood that are not awesome for anyone. And we would like things to be better. It turned into a much bigger exercise. I turned into like a weird even producing organization because we needed ways to attract the artists that we wanted to be represented in our group and producing Bushwick Open Studios was a really good way of doing that. Unfortunately, it was also a really good way of attracting news media and the news media disproportionately represented us as young white people wanting to throw parties and I think that was true of some people but it wasn't true of the intentions of our group and once that train got started I had no idea what I was doing. I had no idea how to stop it or that it could be stopped and it's impossible without understanding development cycles to work faster than a developer works. It's impossible.

Cynthia: So tell me about the length of time that you were involved with [unintelligible 00:28:59], how you segwayed from that to other types of organization.

Chloe: I was involved with Arts in Bushwick from 2007 to 2011. I became the co-lead organizer. I think officially in 2008 but really towards the end of 2007 and I stepped down in 2011 partially because I was moving out of the neighborhood, moving over here to Bed-Sty, partially because it's an all volunteer organization and I was working over 40 hours a week for free and partially because as an artist, nobody knew that I made work because I didn't have any time to make work and I just really felt damaged by that personally. And I had just finished my MFA also in 2011. I just put time and money. I went to CUNY.

It wasn't that expensive but I put time and money into like getting this degree and basically felt like it was the time where I needed to just privilege doing

that as opposed to organizing a community that seemed to be more and more interested in something that I wasn't interested in and producing art festivals that I don't really care about. And it sounds weird to say this as somebody who's on the record historically as the co-founder and co-lead organizer of Bushwick Open Studios. I don't care about Bushwick Open Studios. I don't think it really does anything for the artists who participate. I think it's really fun and I think there's a place to hold in your life for fun but I think ultimately the damaging effect has been greater than the fun.

Cynthia: And the damaging affect with you?

Chloe: Calling so much attention to the neighborhood that makes it clear that it is ripe to be developed by any smart person who wants to put a lot of money into attracting other people into an artsy area.

Cynthia: How does that contrast with what were the original hopes and dreams of this organization when it was started?

Chloe: Artists also need stability. Right? Like I maybe can't relate to somebody who just moved here from Puebla and has six kids although I was working with a lot of those people in my various day jobs in Bushwick so I did relate to them and love them and really be welcomed to their homes and like okay, they're wonderful. But let's say from the get go I am not a Mexican immigrant with six kids but I am a person with limited income who wants stability and who's really invested in this neighborhood and wants to stay here. So really the goal was to kind of create that baseline of shared understanding and to sort of organize together to create stability.

Cynthia: So what were some of the things you were able to accomplish towards those ends earlier?

Chloe: We got a lot of people registered to vote in Bushwick. A lot of people don't change their voting registration. It's a pain in the ass. You don't know how long you're going to stay in an area or maybe you like moved from a state that sometimes votes Republican and you vote Democrat and you feel like it's important to keep your vote in your home state. That I get. Keep your vote in your home state. But in Bushwick there were elections that were determined by like a margin of 50. So if you can get 400 people registered to vote, that could completely sway an election for a local person. And we did. We got a whole bunch of people registered to vote in Bushwick just by making it easy for them. We were able to work out a displacement mapping project that happened through the [unintelligible 00:32:03] Development Council and Fractured Atlas. We were able to serve as the Bushwick consultants for that so that we could really show what we had seen get displaced in our neighborhood just in the time we had been there which at that point for me was like two years but for other people it was more like five and just kind of

using our like on the street knowledge and [cred] to connect with other organizations who could contribute data to this project and talk about their experiences. We were able to get a seat on Community Board Four. That was a major achievement and we held that seat until 2012.

What else? Those were the big things that are coming to mind. There were smaller things too but those were the big ones.

Cynthia: And now towards the end now that you're no longer involved with any of that, where do you see that organization going? Are there any other organizations within the area that are trying to pick up where...?

Chloe: Organizing artists? No. There are lots of organizations that are trying to organize against gentrification largely speaking. I haven't seen any that are specifically targeting organizing artists who tend to be a disorganized group. Right? A disorganized group who get a really bad reputation because they're perceived as not wanting to do anything good but really I think that's a product of this disorganization and once you organize a lot of artists they tend to want to do something good actually so providing that structure seems really essential to me. Arts in Bushwick is doing a combination of wonderful things and less wonderful things. They have a high school fellows program which is something I had always wanted to have and could never get together and they really did get it together and it's amazing, taking high school students from the Bushwick area and just showing them what it's like to have a functional career in a creative sector, giving access to that.

Like some of these kids are so talented as fashion designers, graphic designers, artists, cartoonists, like all different kinds of things. But showing them that that could actually be a job and giving them apprenticeship opportunities and practice and workshops and training and they have a show, and like that's amazing. Then there's like a lot of stuff that I feel like isn't happening anymore and that's the stuff that was more specifically tagged to local politics and government. I don't think there was anybody to really take that up. And the festival is getting bigger and bigger and the efforts in the organization to use the really amplified microphone that they get in terms of the media to say this festival is actually not about what you say it's about, those efforts seem to be diminished.

Cynthia: What are your reflections on [unintelligible 00:34:46] there are more people to take on [unintelligible 00:34:49]. So it can't be done through Bushwick Open Studios or Arts in Bushwick?

Chloe: Not Arts in Bushwick as it currently stands. The thing about Arts in Bushwick is because it remains an all volunteer organization there are these leadership shifts that happen. So this is about to be the tenth year. It feels like they happen about every four years. There's like a seismic shift in who can run it

because people get burnt out which is totally understandable and at any given moment this organization is a representation of the whims and desires of the people who are running it. So potentially if the next group of people came in to run it and that was what they wanted to focus on they would have access to a really strong mailing list, website, other types of like more ephemeral internet based structure that they could use towards this but that really depends on who comes in. Outside of that I don't know what it would take. I don't know what somebody would specifically do. It's really hard. I think it's getting even harder because the neighborhood really has gone through this huge shift already and I don't know what we're holding back from at this point.

Cynthia: So given the history of Bushwick as being a neighborhood that's going through so many trajectories, so many changes, so many contrasting tensions and interests, what do you think would be one way of resolving these issues? With your background as an organizer, what you've seen or [unintelligible 00:36:15]...? How important, how different?

Chloe: At this point I would say that the only thing that can be done is actually a really strong effort to hold onto the affordable housing that's still there. And there is a lot but a lot of it is really decrepit. Like this building is decrepit but like my kitchen functions. I'm talking about really decrepit apartments, unsafe housing conditions. Maintaining the effort to preserve those units as a starting place and to show that actually adds a really deep level of culture and economic functionality to the neighborhood would give the ground to develop more units of that type. But until that can be demonstrated and quantified, I don't see that that would be an initiative that the city would take. Right? So if the goal is always to get it to government and have government opt to protect it, you usually have to demonstrate that's it a voting bloc, an economic bloc, and like somehow essential in some other way. So making an effort to do that I think would be tremendously powerful.

Cynthia: And what have you seen in the collective social movements and activities [unintelligible 00:37:22]? How much of an impact has that had on you?

Chloe: The time has had a huge impact on me but the collective social movements that are happening in Bushwick now have not had much of an impact on me now. I'm really grateful. I think I got the best I could get in terms of flexibility of learning to figure things out and learning to be really invested in a community, learning some of the ways that we enact privilege that are very damaging even through language and really having a space where the neighborhood was generous enough to educate me. I don't think I would have gotten that anywhere else as directly. I miss Bushwick in a lot of ways. I wouldn't live there now. The Bushwick that I miss isn't there. And there are some things about Bushwick that are there now that I really like. I show at galleries in Bushwick. I have a lot of community ties and friends who still live

there but I would say by in large like there were like one or two bars when I moved and now there's really a lot and there's like bachelorette parties from New Jersey and Long Island driving to Bushwick to hang out or like people taking their engagement photos under the street art and stuff. It just seems really like weird gentrification Disneyland to me now. So I don't think I would want to live in the middle of that but I do miss it and I think that going through those experiences which were by in large very difficult and very positive for me I would not be the level of aware that I am now even having grown up in New York City about so much stuff without having been there.

Cynthia: Tell me [unintelligible 00:39:07], are you actively involved in issues, involved in the community where you're living at right now, and how has that affected your art making practice?

Chloe: So when I moved to Bed-Sty, it had gotten to the point where I couldn't really I leave my apartment in Bushwick without people approaching me for information or wanting to tell me something which was on the one hand really great to feel like I could be responsible for all of these like concerns. On the other hand it was really exhausting and I'm actually a much more private person than that just in my personality so it was really hard for me particularly. So I moved to Bed-Sty and I was like I'm just going to be a private citizen. I'm going to be the best private citizen I can be. Right? Like I'm going to shop local. I'm going to ride my bike. And I'm going to meet my neighbors but like I'm not going to get involved with these huge efforts. And that was sort of true and sort of not true. So at this point I've lived here for four years or four years at the end of the month and last summer I was the Create Change resident for the laundromat project in Bed-Sty which meant that the first time I was really going public with my life as an artist and really as an artist invested in social and community engagement, particularly in this neighborhood.

And that was a really great positive experience for me. I don't feel like it was one of those experiences where you're doing as much harm as good. My project not necessarily went as I expected. The experiences I had with people based on the laundromat at the corner of DeKalb and Marcus Garvey which is also where I do my wash was really great and witnessing the dynamics of the neighborhood through that level of like just being in public, operating in public was really fantastic.

Cynthia: So what was the project?

Chloe: I did a project called The Department of Local Affairs which investigates what it's like to collect information about a place that's by locals and for locals rather than by companies for advertising or by locals for tourists, really it's the kind of information you would pass along by word of mouth about how best to use or not use the place that you share together and what that means about

how the place develops. I wanted to do it as a sort of writing and drawing project and people were not so publicly happy to write and draw unless they were kids. But I got a lot of conversational input for myself. So it went very differently than I was anticipating but it was really great.

Cynthia: Do you have any other concluding remarks before we wrap up or any other questions [unintelligible 00:41:38]?

Chloe: I wish that I knew more. I wish that from all the things that I learned I could say that I knew more about how to proceed now. I feel like in a lot of ways I know less than ever and that's a bummer because I don't know who does know. And so on the one hand I would lend my brain to anybody's efforts in a positive direction and on the other hand I feel like it's so out of control. It's so out of control and I don't see what really is being done to limit that or slow it. So that would be my biggest concern. I don't live in a lot of fear of that in my own individual apartment but I live in it for my city and I think that's really too bad.

Cynthia: Thank you so much.

Chloe: Thank you.

[End of recorded material at 00:42:32]